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NIO/EA  
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## TALKING POINTS

South Korea: Another Philippines?

- The potential for increased political instability in South Korea continues to concern knowledgeable experts both here and in Seoul.
  - They are particularly worried about recent increases in opposition activity and whether or not President Chon intends to step down in 1988 as promised.
  - Indeed, the prospects for heightened tensions and possible political instability in the short term appear more likely now than they did a year ago.
- A number of observers point to the similarities that exist between the situation in South Korea today and the events that unfolded in the Philippines over the past few years.
  - Disapproval of President Chon is widespread and demands for greater political freedom and participation are growing.
  - A vocal opposition works within the legislature to take the government to task and student protests and activism have a long history in Korean politics.
  - Moreover, prominent opposition figures like Kim Dae Jung and Kim Yong Sam attract a substantial number of followers and might consider using the tactic of "peoples power" in the future.
  - Some of Chon's most vocal critics come from the Christian community (some 20% of the total population are classified as Christian).
- But, on closer examination, these similarities appear more superficial than real.
  - In fact, it is the differences rather than the similarities in this case that deserve most attention.
  - And attempts by either Koreans or outside observers to draw parallels too closely between Korea and the Philippines could prove unhelpful and even highly dangerous and destabilizing.

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-- Briefly summarized, these differences include:

- Vastly different political cultures and historical experiences exist;
- The traditions of the Korean military in politics and its military capabilities are far different;
- There is no comparison between the economic conditions or economic prospects of each country;
- Neither Kim Dae Jung or Kim Yong Sam remotely resemble Aquino in terms of personality, capability or mass appeal;
- There is a broad acceptance within Korean society of a requirement for political stability on national security grounds; and
- Unlike the CPP/NPA threat based on our assessment of unfavorable trends, the presence of a powerful outside military force--the North Koreans--capable of exploiting any opportunity offered by political unrest and instability in the South to achieve its stated goal of reuniting the Peninsula is real and immediate.

-- Korea will pose considerable challenges for the intelligence community over the next few years.

- On the one hand, we will need to make clear to our consumers that facile comparisons between South Korea and the Philippines can be highly misleading and even dangerous.
- But, on the other hand, we will have to increasingly draw attention to the growing dissatisfaction of Koreans with their authoritarian government and the potential this poses for instability.

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